

GILGAMESH: A PLAY

Cast in order of appearance:

Narrator

Gilgamesh: the King of Uruk

Siduri: a female tavern owner

Waters of Death: devours anyone who tries to cross it

Utnapishtim: the only human to have obtained immortality

Ishtar: the goddess of love and war

Enkidu: a friend of Gilgamesh

Scene I (a tavern)

(Enter Gilgamesh and Siduri)

Narrator: After the sad death of his closest friend, Enkidu, Gilgamesh sets out on a quest to find immortality. He has traveled far, but his determination will not allow him to quit. He arrives at a tavern and knocks on the door.

Gilgamesh: *(knocks on the tavern door)* Please let me in. I'm Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk.

Siduri: *(opens the door)* You don't look like any king to me. Why are your clothes ragged and why has your hair grown wild? *(She becomes suspicious and whispers to herself.)* Maybe I should bolt the door; he could be a criminal!

Gilgamesh: Please don't lock me out! I'm looking for Utnapishtim, the only human to have obtained immortality.

Siduri: I'm sorry, but he is unavailable. He lives on an island surrounded by the Waters of Death. You'll never make it across. Only the sun can cross the deadly waters.

Gilgamesh: If you will only lend me your boat, I know that I can reach him.

Siduri: Every oar that touches the deadly water will be swallowed up. You can't make it!

Gilgamesh: Then I'll cut down every tree to make a thousand oars!

Narrator: Siduri agrees to lend him her boat and Gilgamesh leaves.

Scene II (Gilgamesh in a boat on the Waters of Death)

Narrator: Gilgamesh sets out on the Waters of Death in Siduri's boat. He has a large supply of poles, which he cut before entering the water.

Gilgamesh: Why do you keep swallowing up every pole I dip into your dark waters?



GILGAMESH: A PLAY *(Continued)*

Utnapishtim: The gods decided to send a flood to punish the people, but I was forewarned. So I built an ark to protect my family, and two of every animal. It rained for six days and seven nights and flooded the earth. When the rain stopped, my boat came to rest on a mountain, and I let out all the animals. At that very moment, the gods rewarded my wife and me with immortality.

Narrator: As Utnapishtim finishes his story; he looks over at Gilgamesh only to find that he has fallen asleep.

Utnapishtim: Gilgamesh! *(nudges him)*

Gilgamesh: Oh, I'm terribly sorry! I didn't mean to fall asleep. Please let me have another chance to gain immortality.

Utnapishtim: I'm sorry, Gilgamesh, you will never gain immortality. But there is a plant that grows in the deep waters that will keep you young as long as you live.

Scene IV *(the Waters of Death and a nearby island)*

Narrator: Gilgamesh wastes no time. Utnapishtim tells him that he will find the plant in a glowing spot in the Waters of Death. Gilgamesh dives down and struggles with the plant.

Gilgamesh: There, I have the plant! I do not have immortality, but I will at least be able to enjoy the strength of my youth after eating this plant.

Narrator: Gilgamesh gets back into his boat and then decides to rest on a nearby island. While he is sleeping, Ishtar—disguised as a snake—creeps near Gilgamesh.

Ishtar: Oh, now I can have my revenge! Gilgamesh, this is what you get for not marrying me when you had the chance! *(eats the entire plant)*

Gilgamesh: *(stretching and waking)* Where's my plant? Ishtar! How dare you take this plant! You've taken everything from me!

Narrator: All of a sudden, Enkidu appears as a bird and encourages Gilgamesh to ride on his back as he flies.

Enkidu: Gilgamesh, I want to show you your kingdom from the sky.

Gilgamesh: *(pointing down)* Hey, there are the beautiful gardens! Oh, and I see the great temples and houses! This is truly magnificent!

Enkidu: See, Gilgamesh—your kingdom is your immortality! Your city will live forever in history.

The End